

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

Introduction

There are four great groups with ultimate destinies in the Bible. The Jew and the Gentile, the Church and the Angels. Daniel's focus is on two of those groups, the Jew and the Gentile. The river of prophecy flows through the Jewish people until the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah will redeem Jew and Gentile. Later in chapter 9 we see one of the most detailed prophecies in all the Scripture.

We are invited into Daniel's secret prayer chamber. We are invited to listen to his private talk with God. What will we find as we join Daniel in his prayer closet? We find one of the great examples of intercessory prayer in all the Scripture.

What is interesting is the context of the prayer. Daniel's study of prophecy reveals the exile for his people is about to end. Daniel is a high government official and arguably the most important Jew in captivity. He searches the Scripture for clues as to God's plans and purposes for his people.

As Daniel ponders the prophecies he prays.

Chuck Swindoll writes; "What we will discover is Daniel's unguarded prayer of confession and petition on behalf of the Jewish people. As we examine his intercessory plea for divine forgiveness and restoration, let's take time to reflect on our prayer life as well."

What happens when we pray? We can effect the outcome on so many things. Paul understood the importance of prayer. If ever there was a person who could get the job done through sheer force of will, raw intellect and giftedness it was Paul. But Paul appeals to the early church to pray for him. "Pray for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should" (Ephesians 6:19-20).

Daniel's Study Of Prophecy (vv.1-2)

Daniel 9:1 (NKJV) In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—

We would do well to orient ourselves in the chronology of Daniel. This is the same Darius the Mede mentioned in chapter 6. This is not the same Ahasuerus (Xerxes) mentioned in the book of Esther. That event is still fifty years in the future. This is about 539/538 B.C. or some 67 years after Daniel and his friends were removed from Jerusalem and chosen to serve in the Babylonian court of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

2in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

Daniel's study of prophecy yields important information. The captivity of the Jewish people will last seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11).

Where did Daniel get the scroll of Jeremiah?

It appears that Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles (Jeremiah 29:1-14). "Now these are the words of the letter from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon" (29:1).

The book of Jeremiah was completed about a generation prior to the events of Daniel chapter 9. Daniel already considers the writings of Jeremiah to be Scripture; "the word of the Lord".

The books (scrolls) were available and considered sacred. This goes against the much repeated claim that the authority and the canonicity of the Scriptures emerge hundreds of years later by various councils (See Ron Rhodes *40 Days Through Daniel*; pp.216-217).

In Jeremiah 25:11 we read; 'And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.'

And again in Jeremiah 29:10 we read; "*For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you to return to this place.*"

Some scholars suggest both Jeremiah and Daniel are not dealing in whole numbers. Others believe the numbers are exact; if counted from the first deportation in 604 B.C.; during the reign of Jehoiakim; a second deportation in 597 B.C. and the last deportation in 586 B.C. to about 535 B.C.; when the exiles return to the land after the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-3). Beginning with the first deportation and the decree to return counts about 69-70 years.

We should note that Daniel believed the prophecy and interpreted the prophecies literally.

What is most important about Jeremiah's prophecies? The time for restoration was at hand! The Lord promised He would return His people to the land and prosper them! But Jeremiah's letter also contained a severe warning (Jeremiah 29:12-13). The exiles must confess their sins and seek the Lord their God. Daniel's study of Jeremiah's prophecy prompted Daniel to confess sin, seek the Lord and plead for his people's restoration to the land. In this chapter Daniel fulfills the role of prophet; pleading for the people before God and acting as intercessor.

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

In Daniel's prayer he confesses the people's sin (vv.3-11) and Israel's suffering (vv.12-14). Daniel pleads for God's forgiveness and restoration to their land (vv.15-19).

Daniel Set's His Face To Pray (v. 3)

3Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

The expression set my face (literal *I gave my face*) speaks of resolve, determination we might even say concentration. Daniel is determined to pray and until he receives an answer from the Lord.

Why does Daniel set his face to pray to the Lord God?

The captivity of God's people is about to come to a close. The prophecy of Jeremiah included the promise to visit his people and perform His good word and "*to return to this place*" (*Jeremiah 29:10*). What caused the catastrophic judgment on Jerusalem and the captivity of the people of God? Disobedience to God's Word. In the most simple terms; Daniel knew that obedience to God brought blessing for his people and disobedience brought God's discipline.

The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel all pointed to the people returning to the Land; rebuilding the Temple and awaiting God's Messiah. Daniel's introduction to prophecy included personal purity and his deep dive into prophecy results in the cultivation of deep spiritual disciplines.

A study of prophecy that neglects personal purity and spiritual maturity cannot rightly be called A Study Of Biblical Prophecy.

When Daniel dives deep into prophecy and discovers God's promises for the return of his people to the Land he begins to pray; make supplications; fasts; and takes off the royal robes of a high government official and dons the mourning apparel of a mourner who is grief stricken.

The prophet Daniel desires to see the discipline of the Lord for his people come to an end. And so Daniel adopts the Hebrew way of expressing grief and contrition. Daniel identifies with his people and their sin.

The prayer of Daniel contains five important elements:

1. Concentration. Daniel will focus his prayer. He takes time. He devotes effort. He avoids distraction. He does not allow himself to be diverted from his prayer goals.

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

2. Supplication. The Hebrew term for supplications means entreaties or pleadings. It conveys the idea of a servant pleading with his king or master to meet needs. Daniel is in effect asking God to make good His promises. **The point is that God's character and mercy and compassion and love and willingness to forgive becomes the basis for answered prayer.**
3. Fasting. John C. Whitcomb explains that "in the Bible, fasting was never a means to gain God's attention or impress Him (Isaiah 58:3-12). This is the impression that some receive from people like Gandhi ("there will be no pickle that will pass my lips until my people are at peace"). He is setting aside not just the meal, but the meal preparation, in order to concentrate on the Lord Himself. Daniel knew that sometimes speaking to God is more important than eating".
4. Humility. Sackcloth and ashes in both the OT and the NT is an outward sign of an inward humbling of the soul. This is an expression of grief and deep sorrow for his own sin and the sin of the people of Israel. It is also a declaration of dependence; total dependence on God to be the source of forgiveness and restoration.
5. Honesty. Daniel does not try to hide anything from the Lord. Daniel's desire is to reveal everything. And how can we conceal anything from the Lord who knows all things? He (remarkably) confesses his sin and the sin of his people.

Adoration (v.4)

4And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments,

What other elements can be found in Daniel's prayer? Worship (adoration); confession and petition.

The elements of Daniel's prayer include a personal relationship with God—"And I prayed to the Lord my God." Adoration—O Lord, great and awesome God—Acknowledgement—"who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him" and submission "and with those who keep His commandments."

In what ways are God great and awesome? Think about how God gave Daniel supernatural revelation in dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's dangerous dream (chapter 2). God's deliverance of Daniel's friends from the fiery furnace (chapter 3). And Daniel's deliverance in the lion's den (chapter 6:16-28).

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

This is the God who keeps covenant and mercy. The Lord looks for ways to preserve, bless and restore His children. The Lord disciplines but also loves and even when His people prove unfaithful He proves faithful.

In Daniel's prayer he shines a bright light on God's faithfulness and love and the connection with those who who keep His commandments. Daniel does not compartmentalize God's faithfulness and love as somehow disconnected from His people's obedience.

In Exodus 20:5-6 God said; "I the Lord your God am a jealous God. . .showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." In Deuteronomy 7:9 God affirmed; "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations."

Nehemiah referred to God as "the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments" (Nehemiah 1:5).

Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Confession (vv. 5-7)

5we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.

The prayer of Daniel is in one sense a prayer of restoration for a people who have lost their way.

What do we do if we have lost our way?

We confess our sin!

Confession does not simply mean coming clean. It means agreeing with God about the nature of sin and the character of sin and the condition of sin. Here we find

This is exactly what Daniel does. Daniel identifies with his people. "We have sinned and committed iniquity" (5a). Sin is disobeying God. But it is also intended and unintended wrongdoing. Adam listened to his wife and disobeyed God (Genesis 3:17). In Leviticus 4:1-2 the Lord gave instructions to Moses; "Tell the people of Israel that these are the laws concerning anyone who unintentionally breaks any of my commandments". The Lord reveals these sins to teach and guide His people; and that when they sin they can find a path to forgiveness.

What is most interesting is the long track record in the Bible for people who have lost their way and confess their sin that God is anxious to forgive sin and exercise mercy!

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

Proverbs 28:13 reads; “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

Deuteronomy 4:31; ‘The Lord your God is a merciful God.’ And Jeremiah’s exclamation of hope (Lamentations 3:22-23) “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.” After David’s catastrophic failure and sin David prayed; “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1).

6Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.

Daniel confesses the miserable history of his people in refusing to heed the prophets warnings of judgment for sin.

7O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.

Our failures do not diminish the righteousness of God.

The Bible has a lot to say about guilt and its near relative shame. John Wesley said “Be ashamed of nothing but sin: not of fetching wood, or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbors.”

Daniel retained a sense of shame over sin and sin’s consequences.

Shame has lost favor in our culture.

Over a century ago Mark Twain wrote; “Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to.”

Not so any more.

Daniel prays. He praises God and confesses sin. Then requests can be made known.

Conclusion

We are not finished with Daniel’s prayer. Daniel knows that God is faithful and righteous in his dealings with his people (v.4b; 12, 14, 16a). The prophet realizes that the Lord is a Holy Judge who cannot let rebellion go undisciplined (vv.12-14). He also acknowledges that God is compassionate and forgiving, and He will not permit His people to be afflicted forever (4c; 9, 15a, 18-19).

Daniel Prays For His People Part 1

Daniel 9:1-7

How can you study prophecy and not pray? The saint who advances on his knees never need worry about retreat. And the saint who studies the future can take comfort from the past. God desires for us to seek Him.